

## The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

### Pissing in boots

In the dimly lit tent, a group of soldiers huddled together, preparing for a night's sleep. Among them was Hardcastle, a man who had worked hard to escape the slums, only to find himself surrounded by individuals whose crude manners and violent tendencies disgusted him. The foul language they used nauseated him, but there was one particular practice that he found utterly revolting.

Hardcastle had learned quickly to be vigilant about his possessions, guarding them closely to prevent theft. However, there was another matter that required his attention each night – his boots. He had discovered that some of his comrades had a peculiar habit of relieving themselves in their boots to avoid the inconvenience of visiting the latrine during the night. The thought of it made him shudder with disgust.

At first, Hardcastle believed that this repulsive behavior was limited to only the most debased and crude soldiers. In his mind, it was a reflection of their low character and lack of decency. That perception changed when he came across J.B. Priestley's account in the book "Margin Released."

Priestley, one of the "First Hundred Thousand," had trained alongside Hardcastle. Their unit consisted of a mix of former clerks and seasoned soldiers returning to service.

To Hardcastle's surprise, Priestley revealed that they had also engaged in the practice of pissing in their boots. Priestley further explained that the old soldiers claimed it was beneficial for their boots, making them more comfortable during long marches.

While Priestley had only mentioned pissing in their own boots, it occurred to Hardcastle that perhaps this seemingly outlandish and disgusting act was rooted in an old army custom. It was possible that there was a practical reason behind it. In certain parts of India and other places, leaving the safety of the tent at night could pose serious risks.

As Hardcastle pondered this revelation, he began to see the practice in a different light. While he still found it distasteful, he started to understand that it might have been a survival mechanism born out of necessity. The soldiers, with their experiences and wisdom, may have adapted this habit to protect themselves in hostile environments. While Hardcastle couldn't bring himself to participate in such a practice, his perception of it had shifted. He no longer saw it as a mere display of crude behavior but rather as a reflection of the harsh realities soldiers faced and the ingenuity they employed to ensure their safety.

In time, as he continued his journey alongside his comrades, Hardcastle learned to respect the resilience and resourcefulness of those he initially held in contempt. The bonds forged in the crucible of war transcended backgrounds and transformed him from a fastidious man trying to distance himself from his past into a soldier who understood the complexity and diversity of his fellow warriors.

And so, the story of Hardcastle and his initial disdain for the practice of pissing in boots became a lesson in humility and understanding, reminding him that one's perspective can be reshaped when faced with the realities of life and the shared struggles of those around him.

By Donald Jay